

Mirsky, Allan F. 2001 B

Dr. Allan F. Mirsky Oral History 2001 B

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Allan F. Mirsky

This is a second interview with Dr. Allan F. Mirsky, Chief of the Clinical and Experimental Neuropsychology Section of the Brain and Cognition Laboratory of the NIMH Intramural Research Program, held on November 20th, 2001, in Bethesda, MD.

The interviewer is Dr. Ingrid Farreras of the NIH History Office.

Farreras: I'd like to thank you again for giving so freely of your time for this oral history. The last time we met, you talked a little bit about your background -- high school, graduate school, mentors, type of research -- and I think we stopped right about when you arrived here in '54. Yes, October 1, 1954. And I think we talked a little bit about the funding issues between intramural and extramural labs here at NIMH. And I know you have this information in your chapter, but I thought we'd go briefly over what sections existed within the lab when you first arrived as well as the names of the people who were working in each section. Well, the Aging Section was already here, before the Psychology Lab was even created...

Mirsky: Right. And Jim Birren, Jack Botwinick, Gene Streicher, and Bill Bondareff were in that section.

Farreras: I also have Ed Jerome for the Aging Section. Was he there at the time, or did he come later when you had already left?

Mirsky: I can't remember whether he was there or whether he came later. In some senses, it was like the Section on Animal Behavior, because they also did both animal and human research, and in that sense we were compatible with them as a group.

Farreras: Mort Mishkin mentioned that the Aging, Perception and Learning, and Animal Behavior sections tended to feel denigrated or neglected -- compared to the clinical sections of the lab -- that they were always "muttering" about the treatment of the basic people. Do you share this same sense?

Mirsky: Yes. I suppose that reflected Shakow's set of priorities. Shakow thought it was premature to look into the black box because _____ enough to do to establish the laws of behavior and that these other things, like analysis of brain function, were really the province of other disciplines. But, either because he wanted to cover all bets or because there was pressure on him from Kety and Cohen, he supported the other sections. I suppose we could have all used more help. But those were pretty glorious days, creating a whole new enterprise and having a really good level of support. But I think Mort could always use more.

Farreras: Do you think that Shakow's belief in leaving the more biological or brain studies to other disciplines might have influenced the fact that the Animal Behavior was called Animal Behavior over Neuropsychology from the start? That perhaps he felt that those studies belonged more properly in some other discipline's domain and he didn't want to step on any toes?

Mirsky: Possibly. At the time that the Laboratory of Psychology was established the Laboratory of Neurophysiology, under Wade Marshall already existed and Shakow may have felt that there would be some treading on Marshall's toes.

Farreras: The Neurochemistry Lab already existed by that time as well.

Mirsky: With Cantoni, right?

Farreras: Yes. And Socio-Environmental Studies with...

Mirsky: John Clausen.

Farreras: Yes.

Mirsky: Mel Cohen succeeded him. And there was another huge branch, the Branch of Adult Psychiatry.

Farreras: Is that the one Charles Savage was in?

Mirsky: I think so. I remember the LSD experiments that he was doing at the time. Fritz Redl had a branch. Is that something in your records?

Farreras: Yes, a Child Research Branch. And a Maitland Baldwin. Was he working with Charles Savage on that same LSD work? I know he did isolation type studies.

Mirsky: Maitland Baldwin was the chief of Neurosurgery _____. At that time it was called the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Blindness, before blindness split off and became the National Eye Institute. It was the pressure of Congress to set up a separate institute. Baldwin was chief of Neurosurgery, and the chief of Neurology was Milton Shy, and those were two individuals who made their patients available to us for study. I was especially interested in seeing patients with seizure disorders.

Baldwin, Shy and Cosimo Ajmone Marsan, as well as some other people, were all moved -- lock, stock, and barrel -- from the Montréal Neurological Institute. They all came as a group to set up the institute. I think the first institute [NINDB] director was Pierce Bailey.

Farreras: Wasn't Cameron doing similar work to Baldwin's in Montréal? I thought that was also in the mid-'50s.

Mirsky: Norman Cameron? _____ American Men and Women of Science or something like that _____.

Farreras: No, Ewen Cameron.

Mirsky: Norman Baldwin was doing Penfield type work. He was doing resections on patients with temporal lobe epilepsy and was also doing mapping of echogenic foci. It was a leaf out of the Penfield book, if you will. The one whom I had the closest liaison with, personally, was Cosimo Ajmone Marsan, as well as John Van Buren, another neurosurgeon from MNI or the Neuro, as they referred to it. There's another good connection there because Brenda Milner had been a classmate and friend of Mort Mishkin's so there was certainly a lot of communication between McGill and NIMH. Herb _____, who went to the Neurology Institute, had also been a classmate of Mort and Brenda's. So the NINDB at that time was very much temporal-lobe-disease oriented, and I think it's not so much any more. Well, obviously lots of things are different now than they were back in the '50s.

Farreras: Wasn't Kety Basic Research Director for both the NIMH and the NINDB intramural program together?

Mirsky: He was Intramural Scientific Director for the two institutes, yes.

Farreras: Do you know why those two institutes were combined?

Mirsky: Well, I was just a peon at the time, the lowest rank of investigators. My rank in the Public Health Service was junior assistant scientist or something like that. I hadn't had a rank like that since I worked in the post office, where I was a temporary substitute. But I think it was probably felt that the agendas were _____ and overlapping, and it probably represented the impetus to understand psychiatric disorders as disturbances in brain function, and so that would be a natural that Kety because he was trained as a psychiatrist, but had made his contributions in terms of the physiology of brain function initially of developing the Smith-Kety technique, which launched the era of neuroimaging.

Farreras: So it was a shared subject matter or etiological perspective...?

Mirsky: As I think back on it, it made sense for the two to be under one person. But that didn't last long.

Farreras: The '53 *Annual Report* is missing but the ones for '51 and '52 has both institutes listed jointly.

Mirsky: The narrative is a little fuzzy in my head, but Kety left to become chairman of the Department of Psychiatry at Johns Hopkins, and that lasted a while but then he returned. I think he was not happy with the job because they were expecting him to be the leader in all respects, including training residents and all of the things that department chairs in psychiatry have to do, and I think he just wasn't really happy with it. I'm not sure when that happened but when he returned he was chief of the Laboratory of Clinical Science. And then he left again for Harvard.

Still, _____ kept getting reorganized. Every time _____ gets reorganized and different entities come and go. So a new intramural director for the Neurology Institute was appointed.

Farreras: So how did it come about that they were separated?

Mirsky: I think that at the rate that the institutes were growing – which was 10 percent a year or something like that – it was more than one person could do. So whether it was imposed on Kety from above or whether it was his idea _____, I think it was a good idea.

There's been an effort recently, in the last few years, to bring the two groups together because there were some common, overlapping interests. The really hot stuff in the NIMH intramural program now has to do with neuroimaging, and that's basically the study of brain function, so there should be more overlap. But that's easier said than done, obviously. Do you know about this new neuroscience building that's being constructed? Maybe you've seen some reference to it in the *NIH Record*. It's going to be a vast enterprise replacing, I guess, Building 36 or somewhere in that vicinity, off Old Georgetown Road, and the idea is that there will be all kinds of wonderful shared facilities and there'll be a meeting space where folks from all of the brain-oriented institutes can get together and share ideas and interact. I think that looks marvelous on paper. But to get people actually to work together on projects is not easily done. It has to come from within and the intramural program is extremely competitive. When people arrive they are told, "Don't expect to get tenure because the chances are very, very slight that it will happen." So to get people to share ideas when that guy might publish before you do or... Well, maybe that's too cynical a view and it may turn out to be a smashing success, but I'm somewhat skeptical that just putting people in the same place is going to guarantee sharing of ideas and collaborative work. So there.

Farreras: We'll have to wait and see.

So you earlier mentioned some of the people who were in the early Aging Section and there were five other sections as well: Developmental Psychology, Personality and its Deviations before the names were changed to Child Development and Personality alone.

Mirsky: Wow, I hadn't known about that, Personality and its Deviations.

Farreras: Yes, and Perception and Learning, which later to changed to Perception alone. And then the Chief's Section, David Shakow's Section, and your Animal Behavior Section. Based on your forthcoming chapter I have that Nancy Bailey, Richard Bell, Earl Schaefer, Harriet Rheingold, and Jack Gewirtz were in the Developmental Psychology Section.

Mirsky: Yes.

Farreras: So they were all there when you arrived.

Mirsky: I don't think Harriet was there from the beginning. She came later, as I recall. They were a very talented bunch of people. I have the impression that Earl might have been there in some other capacity, but I'm not sure about that. Dick Bell certainly was and he acted as Acting Chief of the Lab until Dave arrived, because the telegram that I got offering me a commission in the Public Health Service came from Dick Bell.

Farreras: I'll be seeing him in a couple of weeks, so I hope to ask him about that.

Mirsky: Give him my love. Well, at least my best regards.

Farreras: I know what you mean!

Didn't Richard Bell leave the section within the Psychology Lab and move to Fritz Redl's Child Research Branch and following Redl's dismissal became that Branch's Chief?

Mirsky: Yes, but he would be a better historian on that account. I remember him presenting at Psychology Lab meetings and being very interested in higher-order statistical methods of analyzing data and even bringing in these three-dimensional models, sort of higher-order factor analyses from the relationship of _____ variables. He was always interested in quantitative methods and full of enthusiasm, very enthusiastic. Earl Schaefer was more laid back and quieter. Earl and others had developed this PARI.

Farreras: The Parental Attitude Research Instrument?

Mirsky: Yes, I still get requests _____ and Earl hasn't been here in about 30 years.

Farreras: He's at UNC-Chapel Hill.

Mirsky: He must be emeritus now, figuring _____ about the same age as I am.

Farreras: Was there any overlap between the research that was done in this section of the lab and the Lab of Developmental Psychology developed later? Although that was in '66, so you were gone by then.

Mirsky: Right. I left in '61.

Farreras: What about members from the Personality and its Deviations Section?

Mirsky: Morris Parloff, Boris Iglund, Allan Dittman...and Herb Kelman. Herb was at the University of Michigan. He was a Yalie, I think he finished in '54, and I actually lived in the same co-op house where he had lived, on Chapel Street in New Haven. Herb was in that section for a couple of years and then went to Harvard.

Farreras: He's still there.

Mirsky: Oh, he's still there? Herb was very, very interested in peace. What could we do to encourage peaceful solutions to problems? And I have a recollection that may not be related to the Laboratory of Psychology but I should tell somebody so you're elected. I was in Israel. One of my _____ designed to encourage further work on this high-risk project that David Rosenthal had started, and I was having lunch with Sonny Kugelmaas from Hebrew University, who had been one of the original investigators in the Israeli high-risk project. I think we were eating lunch somewhere. It might have been in the dining room at the faculty club at Hebrew University and Herb Kelman was there at the same time. And Herb Kelman and Sonny Kugelmaas, both psychologists interested in personality and who had known one another for years, would not talk to one another because Kelman, I think, had endorsed or helped to sponsor some initiative involving discussions between Israelis and Palestinians, and Kugelmaas thought that was traitorous. He might not have used those words but these men were so angry. I knew of Herb's interest in promoting world peace, and Kugelmaas had fought in some of the early wars of independence, so there was just no meeting of those two minds. It was an upsetting occasion for me. But he was there briefly and then went on to Harvard.

And that was one of the problems: if you look at the real superstars in psychology, the NIMH couldn't hang onto them for one reason or another. Universities could offer higher salaries and offer better facilities if you were a young upstart and you couldn't really compete with your lab chief or get a big grant of your own, so you had to move on. The real stars of the program who have remained have remained because the facilities for what they wanted to do would be very difficult to duplicate at a university. I think of Mort as one of the stars of psychology today in terms of his contribution. How would it be possible for a university to duplicate the multimillion-dollar facilities that he had at his disposal to do those planning studies? Back in the early days at EAO, monkeys cost us \$30 apiece. I used to go to New York, on at least one occasion in my car, and come back with a cage full of monkeys, and, of course, the car would stink for weeks afterwards. But they were \$30 apiece. I don't know how much they cost now, but they're way over \$1,000.

Farreras: Mort Mishkin said \$6,000.

Mirsky: The macaques are \$6,000 apiece?!

Farreras: Yep.

Mirsky: Okay, so at one time the Laboratory of Neuropsychology under Mort might have had 100 animals, so if you figure that they were only \$2,000 apiece at that time, that's \$200,000 just in animals. So I'm sure Mort had offers from various places but couldn't be guaranteed the kind of super support that NIMH was able to provide for that kind of work. People like David Rosenthal, too – another wonderful, creative man – to undertake what was his _____ 30-year Israeli high-risk study...you couldn't get a grant that would cover you for 30 years. You would have had to keep throwing yourself at the mercy of review committees every five years, if you were even lucky enough to get a five-year grant. So David stayed, Mort stayed, and others of us had to seek our fortune elsewhere. But people like Herb Kelman, brilliant social psychologist, couldn't keep _____ determined because there really wasn't a hell of a lot of support for things like social psychology.

Farreras: Even back in the 50s?

Mirsky: Yes, at least not the kind of support that Herb would have wanted. Little by little the support for the Socio-Environmental Studies Lab eroded, as you know, as _____. I don't know what _____ has available to him now. Probably not much, perhaps a couple of physicians. But nothing like what John Clausen had when he began. It's a different view of what's important and what the role of NIMH should be.

You know, we alluded a number of times to the inferiority complex that NIMH has vis-a-vis the other categorical institutes. It seemed like social psychology, personality and psychotherapy were ephemera.

Farreras: That might be why those sections disappeared in the '70s and why the hard core area of psychology, the Animal Behavior Section, became its own Lab, the Neuropsychology Lab.

Mirsky: And some of the sections became institutes, like the Child Health and Human Development.

Farreras: Right. Did that stem directly from the Developmental Psychology Section in the Psychology Lab?

Mirsky: Well, that's my fantasy, but I don't know. I think it really continued under Judy Rapoport _____ at present. _____ Judy Rapoport's Child Psychiatry Branch and there's Sue Swedo's Pediatric and Developmental Neuropsychiatric Branch. Sue Swedo was a Judy Rapoport fellow who was Intramural Scientific Director for a few years and now has the Pediatric and Developmental Neuropsychiatric Branch.

Farreras: So the original section on Child Behavioral Disorders led by Marian Yarrow – originally from the Socio-Environmental Studies Lab – and then by Carolyn Zahn Waxler became the Developmental Psychopathology Section under Judy Rapoport's Child Psychiatry Branch today?

Mirsky: Yes, and it's also moribund. When Carolyn leaves in January 2003 it will disappear entirely. It's been replaced by more biological, neuro-imaging groups, like Judy Rapoport's and Sue Swedo's Labs. Judy Rapoport has been here quite a while. When I returned in 1980 she was here and we did some work together. She's been a very big success. _____ Judy and Herb.

Mirsky: She's a lady of strong opinions and considerable drive and a very forceful person. She doesn't take no for an answer.

Farreras: There was something Elisabeth Murray mentioned yesterday that she thought was a recent phenomenon. In your forthcoming chapter you mention the number of FTEs, full-time equivalents, and the budget, the CAM, and she seemed to think that prior to the last 10 years the Lab Chief had a lab budget and it was the Lab Chief who determined what money went to what section, what person and what project. And that in the last 10 years or so every section began having its own CAM and can determine how the funding is distributed. Is that accurate? And if so, was it in fact in the mid-90s that it began? I got the impression from reading your chapter that every Section Chief chose his or her people for that section. That it wasn't Shakow.

Mirsky: Yeah, I think David had probably _____ of detail.

Farreras: Right, but otherwise he left the hiring up to the Section Chiefs? I wasn't sure if the funding was also determined by him or by each of the Section Chiefs.

Mirsky: Good question. I don't know whether that was a Lab Chief option or not, but I think that probably the most effective way to run the lab would be to say to each section, "this is an amount of money that I think I can offer you for the year. If things change somehow, we can talk about it, but this is what I think we should have." I don't know how long ago CAMs with fixed budgets became policy; she [Murray] may have a more accurate view of it than I. But I do know that when I came in 1980, there was just one CAM for the Lab. That's true. And I didn't have sections, I had units. And the Laboratory gradually became smaller and smaller and smaller and smaller, and here I am. So I think she may be right. I wouldn't disagree with that. Who would know the answer to that?

Are you going to be interviewing any of the other intramural directors or ex-intramural directors?

Farreras: Yes.

Mirsky: Sue Swedo might have been Scientific Director at that time.

Farreras: And Michael Brownstein?

Mirsky: He was there for a short time.

Farreras: Hazel Rea.

Mirsky: Hazel Rea was never Scientific Director.

Farreras: She was [Robert] Cohen's Administrative Asst. in the Clinical Investigations Division.

Mirsky: Right, she was a secretary who made scientific decisions out of the forcefulness of her personality, her strong opinions and her administrative skills. Some people were very resentful of the fact that she was making scientific decisions without being a scientist. If you were on her good side, the decisions were good; if you were not on her good side, you'd question some of the decisions _____. Some people thought that she was way out of her league in terms of the administrative strength that she had. But she came into her influential position under Cohen and Eberhart.

I think the Scientific Directors set up paper structures for themselves to help them in administration, because how many labs and branches are there – 25, 30 – doing all kinds of work. You need somebody, in addition to the Board of Scientific Counselors, to help you decide whether they're doing work that's important and whether they're of good quality.

Farreras: Let me jump in for a minute. Do you know where copies of the old Board of Scientific Counselor Reviews might be? I only know where the ones for the 1990s are...

Mirsky: The earlier ones?

Farreras: Yes, the early days of the 50s and 60s.

Mirsky: I don't know. I know that you can get copies of your own reviews. The ones that I have would be from the '80s and '90s. But whether there are copies of the earlier ones, I don't know. You need to talk to Max, Maxine Steyer about this. She's in the Office of the Director. She started out, I think, as a secretary and she's been there 20 years or more and does a lot of the administrative work, making sure that *Annual Reports* are done and that reviews of individual performance are done. Maxine would probably know where a lot of the bodies are buried. I would talk to her. Another person in the Hazel Rea area is named Sue Thompson, whose name may not have come up. When Fred Goodman was Scientific Director, Thompson, Hazel Rae, _____ who _____ nominal Scientific Director. But Sue and Hazel ran a lot of stuff. When Fred left and was replaced, Sue Thompson was demoted to another position so she left. I think she went to extramural. But Sue Thompson would know about that and I think Maxine would as well. To my knowledge, Maxine has been in the Office of the Director longer than anyone so I would talk with Maxine if you can get to see her. Sweet lady. _____ but she is sweet.

Farreras: Okay. And the only other person I have under Personality is Donald Boomer, "Mike" Boomer.

Mirsky: I'm not sure _____ Mike Boomer, a wonderful raconteur, marvelous storyteller.

Farreras: And for Perception and Learning I have Virgil "Ben" Carlson, Donald Blough, and John Calhoun. Elisabeth Murray mentioned that they called him Mad Calhoun.

Mirsky: He did these ecology studies of rats.

Farreras: Oh, out at Poolesville. Yes, I remember.

Mirsky: He had these little rat civilizations that he would study and would do various manipulations on the environment to see what effect it had on social behavior in the animals. A very imaginative guy but sort of Lorenz _____ kind of stripe. And many people were sort of upset with this approach. Some folk thought he was very imaginative and others thought it was a lot of baloney in that he had no independent variable...

Farreras: So he did qualitative work...

Mirsky: Yeah, very qualitative. I don't know whether he's still with us. A portly Southern gentleman. I remember him well. With a little moustache.

Farreras: I don't have any information on him. The Section on the Chief was Shakow's Section, with David Rosenthal, Ted Zahn, and Allen Dittman?

Mirsky: It's not clear to me whether Dittman was or not in that Section. I thought for a while that he was part of Shakow's Section because he certainly was involved in some of the _____ Chief's activities, but I think he was really in the Section on Personality. He died about 10 years ago. I went to his funeral.

Farreras: I have a photocopy of your first study proposal in the *Annual Reports* here. Are these actual proposals in order to get funding to do the research proposed or are they research reports that summarize what you've done throughout the year?

Mirsky: They were proposals. I think he had to establish a budget and estimate _____ expenditures _____. It's very different now.

Farreras: We were talking about this back at the office: there's very little mention of actual dollar amounts. The Annual Reports of the mid 50s report a specific amount of funding that will go to a certain research topic but there is no indication as to where it goes, who got what amount, and what it was used for – salaries, equipment, subjects... And by the late 50s the sections would propose a certain budget so that it's not listed per proposal /study itself anymore. And by 1960 there is no funding allocation information reported at all. Period. I was hoping you could...

Mirsky: _____.

Farreras: _____.

Mirsky: Well, on this photocopy you just showed me it was all put under the NINDB budget. This was in the days when NIMH and NINDB were one. So for the fiscal year '55 and fiscal year '56, _____ actually two years. Can you believe that?!

Farreras: That's because the first *Annual Reports* don't list any of these.

Mirsky: But we do them now on a yearly basis. When we did them we did them on a yearly basis. This has probably been changed half a dozen times or more over the years. It's not _____

Farreras: So in this case the two of you are the PIs for this research topic.

Mirsky: Yes.

Farreras: And this is the amount of money you were asking for, in advance, for that particular fiscal year?

Mirsky: Yes.

Farreras: What about this where it talks about budget positions and "man years"; is this staff or technicians or...?

Mirsky: Yes, professional and technical positions.

Farreras: And those would be, what, post-docs?

Mirsky: No, that would probably be me. And the technical position would be for a research assistant, like June Caldwell.

Farreras: What do "man years" refer to?

Mirsky: That meant that the amount of professional time devoted to this project was five-twelfths. I don't know how in the world that was arrived at. Let's see, five twelfths and five twelfths, ten twelfths...

Farreras: This is one _____.

Mirsky: In order to come up with two positions these figures had to equal this.

Farreras: So this was the amount of time that these people would be putting in on the project?

Mirsky: Yes. We had to come up with these little guesses as to how much time you'd spend on this. This was our work with the CPT, testing patients. And so at the time I was split between that and the time I was spending doing social behavior studies in monkeys.

Farreras: At the end of the year, did you have to write up some other type of report to verify that you had used the funding allotted to that project?

Mirsky: Yes, we had to write an annual report every year. They were very burdensome and always late. Now it's all done on a computer and you just have to enter a few sentences in a document.

Farreras: But these proposals in the *Annual Reports* are the ones that had been proposed and accepted and given funding for?

Mirsky: Presumably.

Farreras: Were there any projects proposed that didn't get funding?

Mirsky: If that were to happen it would be rather strange because if you knew that your work wasn't going to be supported and you were going to be asked to leave, then you would have known that before you submitted the proposal. The big slaughter occurred in the '70s, right?

Farreras: That's when the sections disappeared, yes. I don't know if it was for this reason...

Mirsky: NIMH was being revamped and there was always the issue of so-called deadwood, the people who were there who had a tenure of sorts but weren't producing or weren't producing the kinds of work that _____ the Scientific Director wanted. So if you really were on the way out, then you wouldn't be asked to produce one of these things, or you might have _____ a terminal document. That sounds pretty awful, but _____ sound like an obituary.

Farreras: OK. I didn't know whether you might have had three or four topics and proposed all three or four and then maybe just gotten funding for two or three, and so you didn't get to work on that last one. So I didn't know whether these were the actual funded studies or just all of the proposed ones.

Mirsky: In the era of the '50s and early '60s the intramural budget was growing every year – and the extramural also – so it was probably unlikely that if you proposed something it wouldn't be funded. I remember having an unusual request one time. I wanted to have a super-CPT constructed that would enable me to change parameters and do all kinds of neat stuff in conjunction with patient studies. And I got an estimate from some engineers that it would cost \$25,000. And my budget was \$7,500. So Rosvold went to Shakow and Shakow went to somebody, and they had some end-of-the-year money that had not been spent on another project and it was approved. I got the \$25,000 to have this apparatus constructed and I used it in several studies. So if you came up with something hot that the administration was interested in supporting, you could get additional money. This wasn't the only source of funds. Now, that \$25K that I got to build the super-CPT, which involved modifying a motion-picture projector and having all kinds of electronic gadgetry associated with it, that might not appear in the *Annual Report*. So this gives you a rough idea of what the level of support for different parts of the laboratory was, but there were also extraordinary expenses that would sometimes be supported. I don't know who was Director of NIMH at the time, but Bob Felix, the first director, really loved the CPT. He thought that was hot stuff then and I think he would have supported anything because it was a way of detecting brain damage.

Farreras: Were you the one who came up with the research topics you proposed?

Mirsky: Yes.

Farreras: So no one was dictating the type of research...

Mirsky: From above _____?

Farreras: Right.

Mirsky: No.

Farreras: If you had several PIs on a particular proposal, would the money be evenly divided among all those PIs or was there any specific distribution pattern?

Mirsky: Well, Rosvold, as Section Chief, would probably have his name on every proposal. And the money would have been used for constructing apparatus or paying subjects, _____ control subjects. The NIH budget is divided into two categories, salaries and "other objects money", and "other objects money" is everything else: supplies, equipment, contracts, travel to meetings...

Farreras: And nowhere is that in print.

Mirsky: You see it now if you look at the budget reports. It would cover any kind of expense associated with that project, and, technically, if you went to a meeting associated with this project, too...but that was sort of loose. Travel - _____ a history of travel at NIH. Every new administration looks at travel and is immediately suspicious. This is funding junkets. You know what happened with the last neuroscience meeting that just took place in San Diego?

Farreras: No...

Mirsky: Well, my numbers may be off but 190 people requested permission to go. One hundred and thirty were approved. And who got disapproved? All the young squirts who really need to go to the meeting. Geezers like me don't need to go to these meetings. Everything's fixed in our brain; nothing much is going to _____. So that's the Bush administration's take on travel. And you have to request permission 35 days in advance. If you request 34 days in advance, as I did for one meeting that I had been going to for 25 years, you will be turned down. So this is very loose. At times there were absolute strictures on travel, meaning you couldn't spend more than \$300 per person per year, which would get you to Baltimore and back, I guess. And at other times, the travel budget was much looser and lifted. Now it's under scrutiny again. I think it's a stupid mistake. But to get back to your point, only the Section Chief would actually know how much would be spent on what. Some people were more assiduous record keepers than others. I have the impression that some people, like Mort [Mishkin], never really paid much attention to his budget. He did what he needed to do, and at the end of the year, if he ran over, he ran over.

Farreras: I've noticed that most of them, under "Budget Activities," mark "research". Very rarely do you see administration, technical assistance, review, and approval. It's practically always research.

Mirsky: And if you decide that you want to take a trip to the Luria Memorial meeting in Russia that's going to require more than you had in your travel budget, you could say, "I'm going to go take this trip." "Do you have the money in your "other object"?" "Yes." "Okay, then have a nice trip." So even though there are categories...

Farreras: They are very fuzzy...

Mirsky: Very fuzzy, and you can move items from one to another, depending on the tenor of the times, shall we say.

Farreras: So that was when you first arrived.

Mirsky: Yes, but I think it's still true that you can move money from one category to another, as long as you don't exceed your budget, and if you do, you go to the Director and say, "Oh, I need more money," and you write up a memo about the super-important hot idea you have, which is clearly going to get you the Nobel Prize within three weeks, and you might get the money.

Farreras: Well, I know you need to go so why don't we stop on this positive note?

Mirsky: Sure. Is this useful for you?

Farreras: Oh, yes, I can't find any of this information printed anywhere. Thanks again.